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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

In Today's Papers

#### German Court Convicts Deniz Feneri Suspects

All media outlets report three suspects working for the Germany-based, Islamist-oriented Deniz Feneri charity have been convicted by the Frankfurt Regional Court for fraud and embezzlement of charity funds. Mehmet Gurhan, chairman of the charity until November 2006, was sentenced to 5 years 10 months in prison. Mehmet Taskan, the chairman of the organization after Gurhan, received 2 years 9 months. Firdevsi Ermis, the charity's accountant, got a sentence of a one year 10 months. The convicted suspects, who had made plea bargained their sentences, said they would not appeal the ruling. German judge Johann Muller said the charity, set up in Germany in 1999, collected donations totaling 41.4 million Euros between 2002 and 2007. Muller said 16.9 million Euro of the donations were transferred to Turkey to support the Islamist-oriented Kanal 7 Television and that the decisions over spending charity funds were made by Zekeriya Karaman, Ismail Karahan (Kanal 7 advertisement manager), Mustafa Celik (Kanal 7 shareholder and chief editor of the channel,) and Zahid Akman (chair of Turkey's radio and television board, RTUK). He said the Turkish government declined German support in the investigation. Muller also said the Deniz Feneri charities in Germany and Turkey worked together. Mainstream Hurriyet, Vatan and the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet quote judge Muller as saying, "Deniz Feneri organizations in Germany and Turkey were founded with the same system. Behind the scenes are Zekeriya Karaman, Ismail Karahan, Mustafa Celik, and Zahid Akman. The real perpetrators are in Turkey."

Government spokesman Cemil Cicek said Turkey would give no backing to the criminals, and that Turkish prosecutors were expected to act on the irregularities. Opposition deputy group chief Kemal Anadol said the AKP should prosecute the Turkish suspects responsible for the irregularities in the Deniz Feneri charity. CHP secretary general Mustafa Ozyurek warned that prosecutors and judges in Turkey should be allowed to probe the matter without interference from the ruling AKP government.

Akman Accused of Fraud in Separate Case in Germany  
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and mainstream Hurriyet report the

Frankfurt prosecutor's office has launched a separate investigation of Turkey's radio and television board, RTUK Chair, Zahid Akman over fraud in a Frankfurt housing society founded by Akman and 18 other partners. The housing company, OFWG, took money from over 1,000 Turks living in Germany, pledging to give them cheap houses. The participants in the building society never got their houses, and their money was never put into the bank account of the society. Shortly afterwards, OFWG declared bankruptcy. The prosecutor accuses Akman of fraud and embezzlement, and underlines that Akman's "partners" were convicted in the Deniz Feneri case, report papers.

#### Editorial Commentary on Deniz Feneri Germany Case and Turkey

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "The Deniz Feneri investigation, as the judge put it, was the biggest fraud case in Germany's history. Turkey cannot afford to ignore such a shame, and it should not. Turkey must follow the Deniz Feneri case with a comprehensive investigation of its in-Turkey links. The Turkish government and judiciary must consider this an obligation. Otherwise, it will not be easy for the AKP to come out of this cleanly."

Yasin Dogan wrote in Islamist-leaning Yeni Safak: "The Deniz Feneri verdict in Germany should be taken seriously but it also has to be considered as individual crimes. Whoever does wrong deserves to be blamed, however, that does not mean defaming a certain group or institution. The Deniz Feneri debate has other dimensions such as: a Germany which is hostile and skeptical about Turkish foundations in Germany; the Dogan Media Group who is coordinating with CHP; and

ANKARA 00001664 002 OF 004

some international NGOs who question the efficiency of Turkish foundations during international disasters."

Gungor Mengi wrote in mainstream Vatan: "The German judiciary fulfilled its responsibilities and concluded the Deniz Feneri case. Now, it is time to find the main suspects of this case in Turkey. However, PM Erdogan's recent attitude shows that he is not very willing to capture the real criminals in Turkey. He has been accusing the media of rushing into things and urging them angrily to wait for the verdict. Well, now the case has concluded and has shown that we did not rush into things. The government, using political immunity as an excuse, has turned the parliament into a shelter for criminals. We all are waiting for the "clean hands" operation to start soon."

Cuneyt Arcayurek writes in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Donations raised by the Deniz Feneri charity in Germany were carried to Turkey by Zahid Akman to be used for political aims. Deniz Feneri was set up in Turkey to cover such irregularities and was granted by the AKP the status of an organization working for public good. The organization has strong support by the ruling AKP. Former Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc even gave them the Ataturk award. PM Erdogan, who should be held accountable, declines doing so. Zekeriya Karaman is free, and Zahid Akman doesn't even think of resigning from his post at RTUK."

The World Association of Newspapers (WAN) Letter to PM Erdogan  
Mainstream Milliyet reports that WAN sent a letter to PM Erdogan urging him to withdraw his threats towards the Dogan Media Group and to reiterate his commitment to the press freedom.

General Basbug Meets with TV Representatives  
All papers report that TGS Chief General Basbug met with Ankara reps of TV channels and news agencies yesterday. Mainstream Sabah reports that during the meeting General Basbug requested the media members not call him "commander" or "Ilker Pasha" (a traditional honorific for Turkish Generals), but just to use his family name, "Basbug." General Basbug gave the same messages to the TVs that he gave to newspapers the previous day. Regarding the military's visit to the two retired Generals incarcerated in Kandira prison in connection with the Ergenekon investigation, Basbug said "necessary permission was obtained from the relevant offices. I did not ask for permission from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister heard the news from the TVs."

Phone Conversation Links Ergenekon with US Consulate Attack  
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that Erhan Kargin, one of the assailants killed in the attack, had phone conversations with the Ergenekon suspects. This reveals that the attack on the Consulate was instigated by Ergenekon suspects and their aim was to create political chaos in Turkey, notes Zaman. The paper adds that the suspects who were in touch with Erhan Kargin were linked to the nationalist association Kuvayi Milliye while, at the same time trying to infiltrate to Islamic Ismail aga sect in Istanbul. This infiltration attempt was explained in detail in the Ergenekon indictment prepared by prosecutor Zekeriya Oz.

Ergenekon Suspect Retired General Eruygur Hospitalized  
Sabah, Zaman, Cumhuriyet, Vatan, Hurriyet, Milliyet and others:  
Today's papers report that retired General Eruygur was hospitalized yesterday after falling and suffering a brain hemorrhage yesterday. He was transferred to Kocaeli University hospital from the high security Kandira prison yesterday. Hospital officials said that "Eruygur fell because of his hypertension and suffered a head trauma. Eruygur doesn't have a life threatening condition, but remains in critical condition." Zaman reports that Eruygur suffered from a neck fracture as well. Sabah reports that TGS Chief General Basbug, during his meeting with journalists, signaled that Eruygur could be transferred to the military hospital GATA if necessary.

ANKARA 00001664 003 OF 004

#### State-Owned AIG

Media continues to cover the global economic meltdown and mainly comment on its potential impact on the Turkish economy. In mainstream Hurriyet, Erdal Saglam reminds readers about the upcoming Turkish local elections and warns: "The AKP government's economic choice is vitally important. If the Turkish economy gets very bad, the government will be responsible for it, not the current global crisis." Papers highlight the U.S. government's effort to save AIG from the current crisis by becoming a shareholder. Radikal says "AIG is now a state-owned company" while Islamist Yeni Safak fronts "U.S. has become the Turkey of 2000 crisis and started owning the companies." Cumhuriyet front page story reads: "The American System is Cracking" adding that economic crisis since last July has led to the demise of three investment banking firms, and there are only two left now.

#### Editorial Commentary on Global Economic Meltdown

Erdal Saglam wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "In the very near future as the global economic crisis begins to effect Turkey deeply, the AKP government will have to make a choice. The current fight with one of the media groups indicates the government's determination to do anything and everything to increase its votes through populism. Thus the AKP's economic choice is vitally important. In other words, if the Turkish economy goes very bad the government will be responsible for it, not the current global crisis."

#### Attack on U.S. Embassy in Yemen

Media coverage of the terrorist attack on the U.S. Embassy in Yemen dominates international news coverage. Many outlets note the U.S. is a repeat target in Yemen and note that "Yemeni Islami Jihad" claimed responsibility. Mainstream Hurriyet carries the headline, "First a Bomb, and then a Rocket," as "Islamist Jihad has claimed responsibility for the attack," which marks, "the eighth attack, including the July attack against the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, against a U.S. diplomatic mission over the last five years." Mainstream Milliyet writes, "The attack reminds one of the July attack against the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul," but notes, "the U.S. sees the hallmarks of Al-Qaeda" in the Yemen attack yesterday. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet writes, "In Yemen, the Target is Once Again the U.S." and points out, "this is the second time in six months that Islamist militants have targeted the U.S. Embassy in Yemen even though the Embassy compound is protected like a castle." Islamist-oriented Zaman writes, "In Yemen, the U.S. Embassy is Attacked Again." Leftist Taraf reports, "The U.S. is Targeted for a Second Time in Yemen." Cumhuriyet notes that Yemeni officials have determined that Al-Qaeda is behind this attack. Milliyet also carries a list of terrorist attacks against the U.S. in Yemen since 2000.

TV News:  
NTV

#### Domestic News

- Turkish stock exchange index, affected by the global meltdown, dives to its lowest level in 2008.
- The Turkish Parliament will launch the new legislative year on October 1.
- President Abdullah Gul will travel to Germany October 14 for the opening of International Book Fair in Frankfurt.

#### International News

- Suicide bombers blew up a car outside the gate of the U.S. Embassy in Yemen's capital, Sana'a, killing 16 people and six assailants.
- Syria's Foreign Ministry said indirect talks between Syria and Israel have been postponed at the Israeli's request.

ANKARA 00001664 004 OF 004

- Russia's Foreign Ministry condemns the NATO chief's visit to Georgia, saying it showed "Cold War reflexes" and will further destabilize the region.

WILSON